



State Senator

MAY 23, 2005

VALDE GARCIA

Serving the 22nd District

Shiawassee-Livingston-southern Ingham counties

COFFEE BREAK NEWS

Protecting property rights

The rights of Michigan's private property owners will be more secure and clearly defined thanks to two pieces of legislation introduced in the Senate. Following a U.S. Supreme Court decision in the Kelo v. City of New London case, which allows the seizure of private property for private economic development projects, the Senate has put together a plan to help protect the rights of Michigan's private property owners. Senate Joint Resolution E, a constitutional amendment dubbed "MI Home" has been introduced to strengthen Michigan's constitution by defining what constitutes public use and clearly stating that land cannot be taken away for private economic purposes. Senate Bill 693 strengthens Michigan's existing eminent domain statute and clarifies that private business economic development could not fall under this "public use" definition. The proposed legislation is before the Senate Committee on Transportation. If approved, the amendment is slated to be on the ballot for the 2006 election, while SB 693 is expected to be brought before the full Senate later this fall.

Children's access to violent video games limited

Parents will now have an easier time keeping their children from being exposed to extremely violent and sexually explicit video games under legislation approved by the Senate and signed by the governor. The legislation would make it a crime to sell ultra-violent or sexually explicit games to children.

This year, undercover investigations conducted by county sheriffs found that children as young as nine years old were able to purchase video games rated for adults-only at many of the stores investigated. Violent video games have been linked to violent or criminal behavior in young people. Many studies have shown that violent or aggressive behavior can be caused by playing games that graphically depict violence. In one case in Ingham County last year, two boys caused a crash that killed a father and his young son. The boys had been driving recklessly and were trying to imitate the violent game Grand Theft Auto, in which players kill pedestrians and other drivers.

Senate votes to keep sexual predators out of the classroom

Sex offenders would be stopped from working in schools under legislation, called the Student Safety Initiative, that passed the Michigan Senate recently.

The Student Safety Initiative includes:

- Requiring background checks on all paid school and day-care center employees and prohibiting anyone with a sex offense from being employed;
- Creating Student Safety Zones by prohibiting convicted sex offenders from living, working or loitering within 1,000 feet of a school;
- Revoking teaching certification for convicted sex offenders; and
- Requiring all school employees to self-report any criminal charge to their school district and to the Department of Education.